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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION

WORLD SOLAR PROGRAMME 1996-2005

Letter dated 5 June 1998 from the representatives of China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Malaysia, Niger, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly an item entitled "World Solar Programme 1996-2005".

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, adopted a programme entitled Agenda 21, which drew international attention, inter alia, to the unsustainable pattern of energy production and consumption and to the need for humankind to rely increasingly on environmentally sound energy systems, particularly new and renewable sources of energy.

As a follow-up to UNCED, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with several partners within and outside the United Nations system, initiated a process for the promotion, development and dissemination of the Solar Programme covering the decade 1996-2005. This Programme was approved in June 1997 by the World Solar Commission, a body composed of 18 heads of State and Government, chaired by His Excellency Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, at its nineteenth special session, held in June 1997, reviewed the progress made over the five years that have passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and adopted a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (document A/S-19/29 of 27 June 1997). In the section on energy of this Programme, the

need for promoting efforts in research on and development and use of renewable energy technologies at the international and national levels is expressly recognized. This is precisely the overall objective of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, which is an instrument at the service of the world community for the promotion, development and deployment of renewable energy technologies as a major contribution to sustainable development. Consequently, the full involvement of all actors concerned - national Governments, international organizations, academic and research institutions, banks and other financial entities, non-governmental organizations, industries, etc. - is essential in order to ensure the successful implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

The General Conference of UNESCO adopted at its twenty-ninth session (November 1997) a resolution calling, inter alia, upon all UNESCO member States to contribute to the success of the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

We believe that the time has now come for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a similar resolution in support of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and propose that consideration of the new agenda item and the related draft resolution take place in plenary meetings of the fifty-third session.

An explanatory memorandum is annexed to the present letter, in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (see annex).

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to the United Nations

(Signed) Dr. Makarim WIBISONO
Permanent Representative of the
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(Signed) Dr. Dore GOLD
Permanent Representative
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(Signed) Ms. M. Patricia DURRANT
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of Jamaica to the United Nations

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(Signed) Mr. Machivenyika Tobias MAPURANGA
Permanent Representative
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(Signed) Mr. Kamalesh SHARMA
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(Signed) Mr. Peter P. CHKHEIDZE
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(Signed) Mr. Francesco Paolo FULCI
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ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, a high-level expert meeting "The Sun in the Service of Mankind" was held in Paris, at the initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in broad partnership with major relevant institutions, among which were the European Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. This meeting recommended that, in order to give a strong political impulse to the development of renewable energies, a three-year campaign entitled "World Solar Summit Process" should be undertaken, leading to the organization of a World Solar Summit at the highest possible level. A World Solar Commission, chaired by His Excellency President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and composed of 17 heads of State and Government was established in 1994 to oversee and guide this preparatory process.

The World Solar Summit was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 16 and 17 September 1996, with the following results:

(a) Adoption of the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development;

(b) Approval of the outline of a 10-year programme for the promotion of renewable energies;

(c) Launching of the preparation of a World Solar Programme 1996-2005, to be completed within a nine-month period.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 was approved by the World Solar Commission at its second session held in New York on 23 June 1997, on the occasion of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 five years after UNCED.

During the preparatory process leading to the Summit, the Director-General of UNESCO systematically reported to the Secretary-General and to the Executive Heads of the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes concerned on the progress made, calling upon their partnership. On 7 September 1995, in reply to a letter from the Director-General of UNESCO, the Secretary-General noted the pursuit of this UNESCO initiative as an integral part of the follow-up to Agenda 21, which emphasized the crucial role of energy in economic and social development, and welcomed the development and implementation of the programme as a joint, system-wide effort. The Secretary-General ended his letter with the following words: "By focusing on the transfer and sharing of knowledge in the development of renewable energy technologies, the World Solar Summit process can make a distinct contribution to the work of the United Nations and the system as a whole in support of sustainable development". Following the successful conclusion of the World Solar Summit, the Director-General of UNESCO officially informed the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the concerned agencies

and programmes of the United Nations system, of the results of the Summit. In his reply of 21 November 1996, the Secretary-General stated that "The Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development, as well as the outline of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 approved by the Summit, represent a high degree of political commitment, which is an essential requirement to address the difficult issue of energy supplies in a manner consistent with sustainable development".

In October 1996, a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO briefed delegations attending the fifty-first session of the General Assembly on the results of the World Solar Summit and reported officially thereon to the Second Committee of the General Assembly during its examination of the item on sustainable development. The Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development, the outline of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and the text of the World Solar Programme itself were distributed as information documents during the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (see A/C.2/51/5) was prepared, taking as a basis the outline approved by the World Solar Summit and the commitments made in the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development. It contains a series of recommendations for actions to be taken at the national and international levels in order to attain the objectives resulting from the above-mentioned commitments. The Programme also includes global, regional and national renewable energy projects to be implemented as a joint effort of the organizations and programmes concerned of the United Nations system, other international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, academic and research institutions, financing entities, industries and the private sector. Implementation of a number of the 300-odd high-priority national projects is already under way; as of 30 April 1998, the projects being implemented with international financial assistance amounted to a total of $400 million. In addition to that, a number of other national projects are being implemented with national funding only, both public and private. This indicates clearly that the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 functions as it was conceived, namely, as an action-oriented instrument at the service of the international community for the promotion of renewable, environmentally friendly energies, in the interests of industrialized and developing countries alike. Following the resolution adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO, endorsement of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 by the General Assembly would constitute a major contribution to its successful implementation and a recognition of the work of the World Solar Commission for the promotion of renewable energies.